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RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC//DDI/OEA//
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC//DB-Z//
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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 7009
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RUEHGH/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 1564
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 5387
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RUEHGP/AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE 7531
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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 2184
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SUBJECT: SEOUL - PRESS BULLETIN; December 4, 2009

TOP HEADLINES

Chosun Ilbo

Former Prime Minister Han Myeong-sook Allegedly Received Tens of
Thousands of Dollars from
Former Korea Express President

JoongAng Ilbo, Dong-a Ilbo, Hankyoreh Shinmun,
Segye Ilbo, Seoul Shinmun
Rail Workers Call Off Strike After Eight Days, Burdened
by Strong ROKG Response and Deteriorating Public Opinion

Hankook Ilbo, All TVs
ROKG, Ruling Party and Representatives of Labor and Management Near
Agreement on Labor Union Rules

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS

U.S. Ambassador to the ROK Kathleen Stephens, in a Dec. 3 forum
organized by the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses, said that
Special Representative for North Korea Policy Stephen Bosworth's
trip to Pyongyang is aimed at resuming the Six-Party Talks.
(JoongAng, all TVs)

According to a Defense Ministry source, on Dec. 2, shortly before
President Barack Obama's announcement on troop escalation in
Afghanistan, the USG informed the ROKG that there will be no
deployment of USFK troops to Afghanistan. (JoongAng, Dong-a,
Hankook, Segye Ilbo, Seoul Shinmun, KBS, MBC)

MEDIA ANALYSIS

-N. Korea

Conservative Dong-a Ilbo carried an inside-page article on U.S.
Special Representative for North Korea Policy Stephen Bosworth's
Dec. 8 trip to North Korea. It argued that the key (to the success
of Ambassador Bosworth's visit) is whether North Korea will return

to the Six-Party Talks and that there will be a long way to go before the Six-Party Talks get back on track. The article also conjectured that if North Korea presents conditions for returning to the Six-Party Talks, the U.S. may seek bilateral talks with North Korea and the Six-Party Talks at the same time. Dong-a wrote in the headline: "N. Korea: 'Peace Treaty Is the Issue of Greatest Concern' vs. U.S.: 'Denuclearization First'"

In a related development, right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo and all TV networks quoted U.S. Ambassador to the ROK Kathleen Stephens as saying in a Dec. 3 forum organized by the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses that Ambassador Bosworth's trip to Pyongyang is aimed at resuming the Six-Party Talks.

-U.S. Afghanistan Strategy

Right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo and moderate Hankook Ilbo carried reports noting that the day after President Obama unveiled his plan to begin withdrawing U.S. troops from Afghanistan in July 2011, top U.S. administration officials told Congress that any timetable for a troop pullout is still flexible. Hankook Ilbo's headline read: "Faced with Fire from Congress, Obama's Afghan Strategy Becomes 'Shaky' Just One Day after Its Announcement"

FEATURES

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1N. KOREA: 'PEACE TREATY IS THE ISSUE OF GREATEST CONCERN' VS. U.S.:
'DENUCLEARIZATION FIRST'
(Dong-a Ilbo, December 4, Page 10: Excerpts)

By Reporter Kim Young-shik

Special Representative for North Korea Policy Stephen Bosworth will visit North Korea on December 8 following his stop in the ROK on December 6.

Will Bosworth's visit be a starting point for "grand bargain" negotiations?

The moment North Korea pledges to return to the Six-Party Talks will mark a starting point for "grand bargain" negotiations. However, there will be a long way to go before the Six-Party Talks get back on track. An ROKG official emphasized that a resumption of the Six-Party Talks does not mean a resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue.

To make the "grand bargain" negotiations successful, it is necessary that North Korea dismantle its core nuclear programs. The ROK and the U.S. maintain their position that they will continue to pursue a two-track approach of dialogue and sanctions until the North takes substantial steps toward nuclear dismantlement. However, North Korea has not changed its attitude.

Will the U.S. negotiate with the North?

One of the greatest concerns is whether Ambassador Bosworth will negotiate with North Korea during his three day visit to Pyongyang. Leon Segal at the Social Science Research Council said that it is unlikely that the U.S. will be able to persuade North Korea to return to the Six-Party Talks without negotiating with the North. In particular, the U.S. will be in a difficult position if North Korea demands bilateral negotiations with the U.S. as preconditions for rejoining the Six-Party Talks.

In fact, the U.S. has not been consistent in its position. During the G20 summit in London in April, President Obama made sure that the U.S. has no interest in holding direct talks with the North. However, the U.S. said later that U.S.-North Korea bilateral talks will take place within the (framework of the) Six-Party Talks.

North Korea is bent on signing a peace treaty (with the U.S.)

The Choson Sinbo, a pro-North Korean newspaper based in Japan, reported on December 2 that establishing a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula will top the agenda at North Korea-U.S. bilateral talks. The peace treaty issue is expected to be hotly debated during Bosworth's trip to Pyongyang.

North Korea has been saying that its nuclear development resulted from the U.S.'s antagonistic North Korea policy. The North claims that a peace treaty (with the U.S.) would allow U.S. forces in the ROK to be withdrawn, paving the way for the resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue. Clearly, North Korea intends to trade denuclearization for a peace treaty.

The ROK and the U.S. say that North Korea should take steps toward denuclearization first and that the peace treaty should be discussed between the ROK and North Korea. U.S. Ambassador to the ROK Kathleen Stephens said on December 3, "I think we've always been clear that when we talk about a peace regime or a peace treaty or a peace agreement, the issue of the U.S.-ROK alliance is not on the table. That is a lasting commitment we have."

U.S. AMBASSADOR STEPHENS: "THE PURPOSE OF AMBASSADOR BOSWORTH'S VISIT TO PYONGYANG IS TO FACILITATE THE EARLY RESUMPTION OF THE SIX-PARTY TALKS"
(JoongAng Ilbo, December 4, 2009, Page 12)

By Reporters Ye Young-joon and Lee Young-jong

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Ambassador Stephens: "(The Six-Party process) is the best mechanism to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula."

U.S. Ambassador to the ROK Kathleen Stephens said on December 3, "U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy Stephen Bosworth will visit Pyongyang with the purpose of facilitating the early resumption of the Six-Party Talks and with the purpose of securing North Korea's reaffirmation of the September 2005 Joint Statement principles." Ambassador Stephens made the statement during a defense forum hosted by the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses (KIDA) at Hotel Shilla. She added, "We continue to believe that the Six-Party process is the best mechanism to achieve these goals."

Ambassador Stephens went on to say, "In the September 2005 Joint Statement principles, the commitment made by the parties is that with the verified dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear program, the other parties would seek to establish a lasting peace agreement and normalize relations." This remark appears to reaffirm U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's November 19 statement that if North Korea recommit to denuclearization, "the U.S. would explore ... normalization of relations, a peace treaty, and economic development assistance." Ambassador Stephens also said, "I think we've always been clear that when we talk about a peace regime or a peace treaty or a peace agreement, the issue of the U.S.-ROK alliance is not on the table. That is a lasting commitment we have. That is not on the table."

Prior to this, Scott Snyder, Director of the Asia Foundation's Center for U.S.-Korea Policy, said that North Korea puts the issue of replacing an armistice with a peace treaty front and center, and after Ambassador Bosworth's visit on December 8, it plans to decide whether to rejoin the multilateral talks.

Snyder, who visited Pyongyang at the end of last month, stressed during his interview with Voice of America on December 3, "The feeling that I got in Pyongyang this time is that there is a wide difference of opinion between the U.S. and the North over the nuclear issue."

STEPHENS